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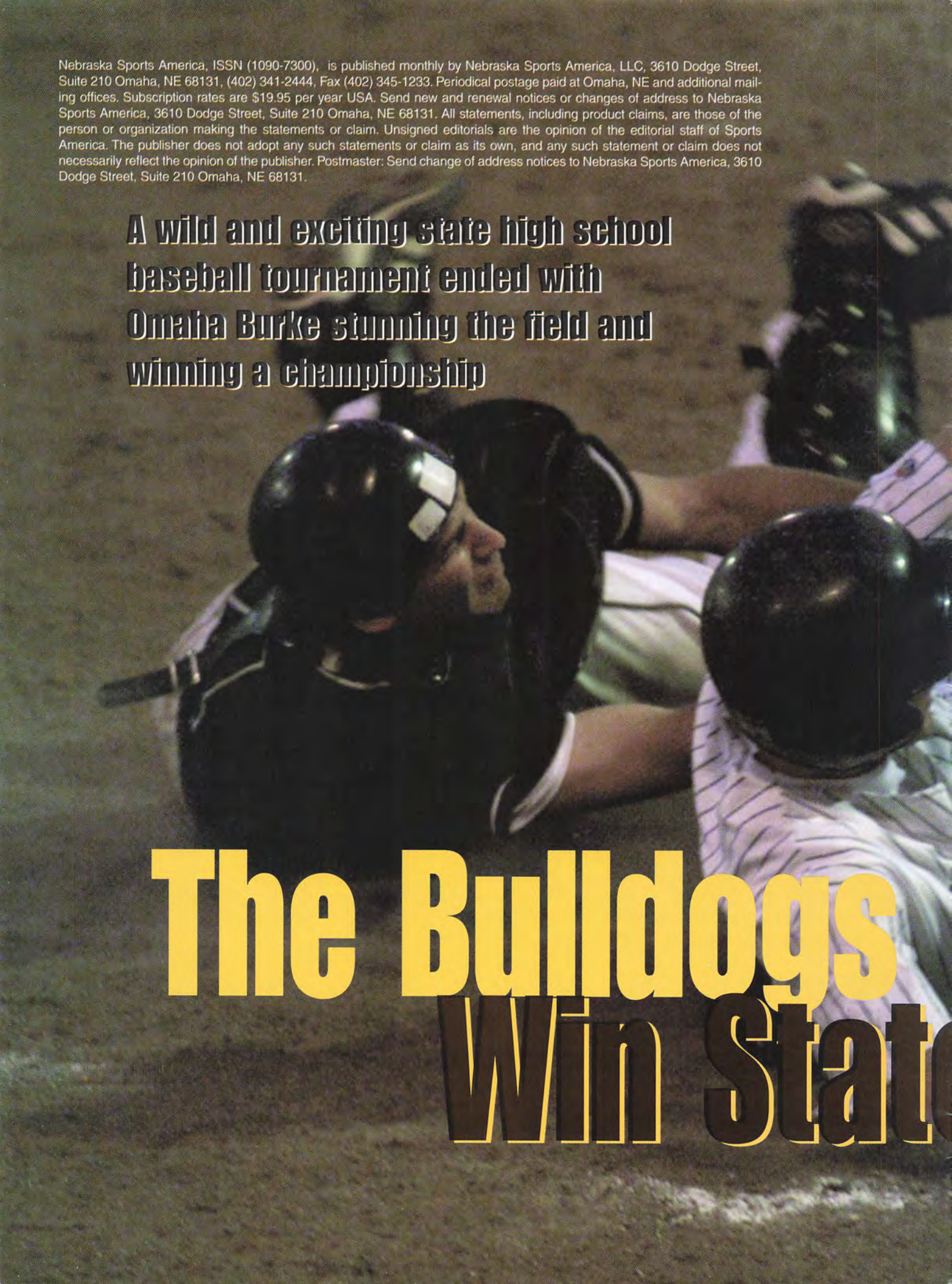
A wild and exciting state high school baseball tournament ended with Omaha Burke stunning the field and winning a championship



The Bulldogs Win State

PHOTO BY ERIC FRANCIS

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On the Cover: Nebraska and Creighton played in front of the fourth-largest crowd in NCAA baseball regular-season; (inset) Nebraska junior quarterback Eric Crouch. Photos by Eric Francis

YOUR sports magazine

Does Omaha ever put its collective best foot forward any better than June when the College World Series comes to town?

It would be difficult to come up with any other event or happening that pulls Omaha together as a half-million member Welcome Wagon more than the annual collegiate baseball extravaganza that is the CWS. From corporate tycoons to average Joes, the city steps up to the plate and knocks one deep on an annual basis, welcoming fans from across the country. For these eight days in June, the eyes of America are fixed firmly on our city and rarely does Omaha whiff on the chance to shine.

If you have picked up your copy of Nebraska Sports America at the stadium or around town this week, we're glad to have a new set of eyes enjoying our magazine. For our regular readers — subscribers and newsstand buyers alike — we hope this edition of NSA captures the excitement and electricity of the CWS to the point that you high tail it to Omaha at some point to catch the action. If you're in Phoenix or Philly, you are excused from coming on such short notice...but make plans for 2001 now!

For better or worse, the CWS organizers have tried to make Rosenblatt a self-contained experience. You can eat three square meals, drink a river of sodas and what not and take part in many activities without ever leave the confines of the stadium. Kudos to the CWS committee in town and the NCAA for doing so much for the fans.

But I have to tell you, there is a lot more to Omaha than this one glorious parcel of land. For heaven's sake, see the city! You can read more about things to do in Omaha on page 22 inside the magazine, and that is just scratching the surface. It is a city worth exploring, worth getting to know, worth experiencing. Spending all of your days and nights at the ballpark without ever venturing out is doing yourself and the city a great disservice.

When I travel on business, my single greatest regret is that I don't get to see more of the cities I visit. Conventions and conferences are usually self-contained in a given hotel or convention center and, if special activities are not included in the event agenda, it is difficult if not impossible to really see the city you are in. If you're visiting Omaha for the CWS, on a trip of pleasure, don't get caught in the same trap. Make time to make new friends away from the stadium...you'll be oh so glad you did.

PC

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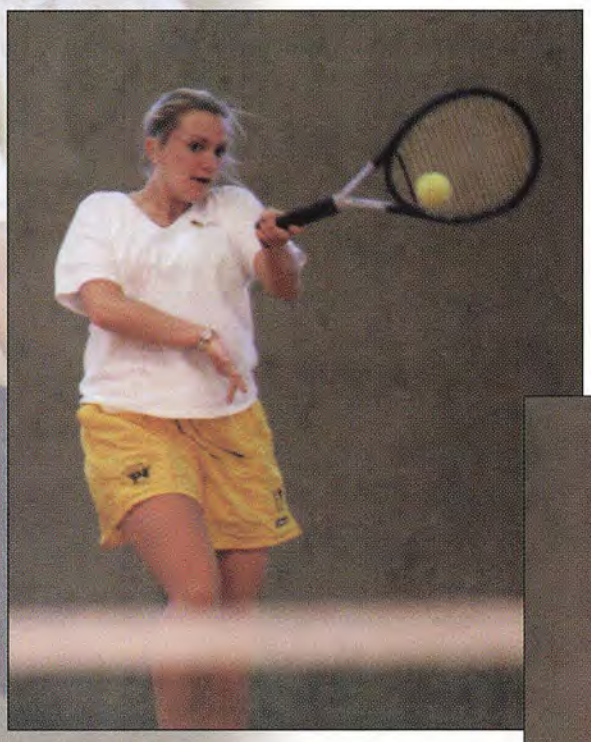
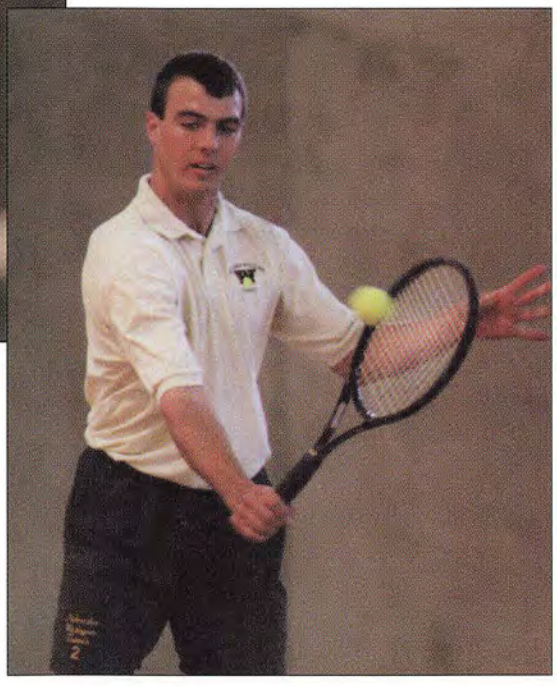


"The challenge we have on the tennis court is to not conform to the patterns of this world. Allowing God to transform our attitudes with each shot, made or missed, allows us to be witnesses on and off the court."

Kathy Weber and Chad Parker
Nebraska Wesleyan Tennis Team



"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, His good, pleasing and perfect will."
Romans 12:1-2

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BETWEEN the lines

BY JOHN KNICELY

The dream is alive & well for Bartee

Some day in the years to come Kimera Bartee will sit with his son at Rosenblatt Stadium during the College World Series and share stories relating to his own national tournament experience.

Several things have to happen first: his one-month old son has some growing to do and Kimera will have to change careers. Like every other professional baseball player, the former Creighton standout is currently tied to a contract that makes no provision for a week off in June.

Kimera is just thankful for the exception last month that allowed him the chance to witness his son's birth. When the cell phone rang with news that Kimera's wife Brandie was in labor, his Triple A manager graciously gave him the sign to steal away from the clubhouse.

First though, the anxious father-in-waiting had to deal with a slight complication. Kimera was in Indianapolis with his Louisville teammates and the contractions were progressing some two thousand miles away in his home near Phoenix. He successfully boarded a last minute flight that touched down at midnight and when baby Amari bellowed for the first time just before sunrise, his proud papa was there to enjoy the moment.

The hearty eight-pounder may not prefer baseball when he's old enough to play but he's sure to be well-schooled in the Bartee baseball legacy. Amari's grandpa was drafted 34 years ago by the Cardinals and his uncle just finished the college season with Iowa Western.

Kimera's name is listed as property of the Cincinnati Reds. He refers to his trade from the Detroit last December as "good news because the change was needed." After five years with the Tigers opportunity had dwindled. The high point was '96 season when Bartee played 110 games as centerfielder for the big league club.

The trade to Cincinnati seemed to renew opportunity. Earlier on thesame day Reds General Manager Jim Bowden had broken off trade talks with Seattle for Ken Griffey saying, "we have a better chance of bringing Goofy back than Griffey."

Two weeks later, the player Bartee describes as "the best player in the world", decided he too wanted to play centerfield for Cincinnati, in effect diminishing Kimera's new found hopes.

The surprise in this unfortunate circumstance has been the settling influence provided by another superstar, Deion Sanders. Contrary to the self-serving image of "Neon Deion", Kimera says Sanders "is actually quiet, very down to earth, and great to talk to." The two became dugout friends.

Slowed by the bum knee, Sanders returned home last month to concentrate on football and although Bartee is sad to see him go, the decision does eliminate a potential candidate for the major league roster.

Bartee made it to the big leagues, and onto a trading card, with the Tigers.

Another trade might be best for Bartee but his focus is simply on the game at hand. His batting average has been steady at .285 and in one game alone he knocked a grand slam and double for five runs. He reminds himself that he's still among the few who are actually living a childhood dream of playing professional baseball.

And every year at this time the Omaha native is reminded of another dream fulfilled: the chance to play in the College World Series.

Bartee was a freshman when Creighton qualified in 1991 and he vividly recalls that he and his teammates were "treated like superstars for a week and a half." Bartee says the fans were so great they even applauded when the Bluejays would leave a restaurant.

In the middle of that marvelous experience, Bartee came off the bench to play in the winners bracket matchup between Creighton and Wichita State, now considered a Series classic.

The defensive gem was deadlocked at 1-1 in extra innings when Bartee took the field at second base. With a Shocker in scoring position, a roller up the middle caused a collision between Bartee and shortstop Bobby Langer.

Replays show what proved to be the winning run probably would have crossed the plate even if the ball had not slipped through.

It was an unforgettable moment for an 18-year old playing before a packed stadium and national television audience. His only at bat in that game was against freshman ace Jamie Bluma, who later signed a pro baseball contract with Kansas City. Bluma prevailed in the series with a slider that Bartee drove into the ground but when they met again later in the professional ranks, Bartee knocked the same pitch for a base hit.

Those are some of the memories that young Amari will hear about in the years to come. Eventually he'll understand the significance. Not only did his dad make it to the major league "show", he also played in "the show" at Rosenblatt. That's something to brag about.

John Knicely is news co-anchor at WOWT-TV (Channel 6) in Omaha and a regular contributor to NSA.

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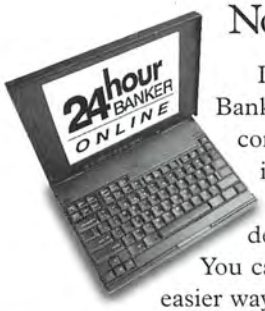

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Images Provided by DLR Group

Lincoln's New GEM

New diamond will be a crown jewel for the capitol city

Rosenblatt Stadium is the undisputed Mecca of college baseball, but Omaha's grand ballpark will have to share some of the in-state spotlight with a new facility set to rise from a grassy expanse in Lincoln.

Construction is underway in the capital city on the new home of the Huskers and an yet-to-be-named Pioneer League team. And while Interstate 80 does indeed bisect Lincoln some 60 miles west of its pass just beyond the left field bleachers at Rosenblatt, someday the road to the College World Series may go through Lincoln in a more figurative way.

Yes, Nebraska's up-and-coming baseball team would surely love to host an NCAA regional and/or Super Regional, and new digs may just be the answer. Nebraska's chances of hosting a post-season game at woefully inadequate Buck Beltzer Field are next to zero.

Husker Coach Dave Van Horn knows that in 1999, six of the eight teams that hosted Super Regionals advanced to the CWS. They were great teams, yes, but many great teams went on the road for the post-season and had their dreams snuffed out on the turf of their conqueror. Indeed, the home field is the place to play when a trip to Omaha is on the line.

There is nothing left out of Lincoln's new ball yard, which will be as nice as any of its size in thecountry. The grandstand will seat 4,500 fans and another 1,500 spectators can be accommodated on an elevated grassy perimeter. The grass areas may take on a life of their own as preferred seating, rather than overflow, as fans enjoy games while sitting on a blanket or lawn chairs.

While watching games from that vantage point will provide a small-town nostalgic feel, this is very much a modern big-city park. Evidence of that includes the 18 luxury "Sky Suites" with seating for 16 in each. For a slightly more modest investment, up to 180 fans can watch games from the club level boxes, which will include handy access to the Diamond View Lounge.

and Charleston location will be transformed into a classic "first impression" for those coming into town on the I-180 connection to I-80.

Plans also include a 750-seat softball stadium that will be home to NU's team. Walkways will connect the complex to the UNL City (main) Campus and the Haymarket.

The baseball stadium — home to the Huskers in the spring and Lincoln's new minor league team in the summer — will be the centerpiece of what is being billed as a new "Gateway to Lincoln."

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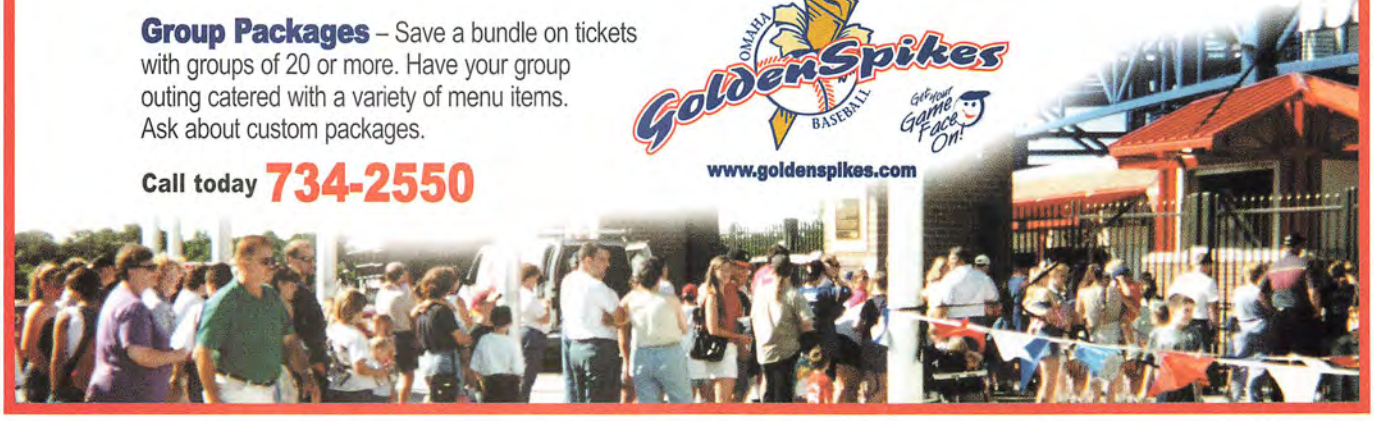

Photos by Eric Francis

Ruggers

The Cornhusker State Games debuts an age-old battle not for the weak of knee...or chin...or ribs...or nose...or...

BY KEVIN WARNEKE

Dom Dacy, just 17, plays rugby for fitness, fun and fellowship. Greg Sliva, twice his age, plays rugby for the same reasons.

Dacy tried others sports - as did Sliva - and chose rugby. Both have ties to the sport. Dacy's father played rugby; his brother plays for UNL's club team. As a youngster, Sliva watched his cousin play, and wanted to try rugby for himself. "It looked interesting."

Both plan to play long after most athletes have retired from their sports. At 35, Sliva figures he has at least another five years; Dacy plans to play in college at Loyola of New Orleans. After that, who knows?

"The bottom line is the game itself," Sliva said. "The passion I still have for the game — your commitment to fitness and the people on your team. It's not just a one-player sport. Fourteen other guys depend on you as you depend on them."

Said Dacy, who played on a combined Central High-Creighton Prep club team in high school: "Rugby is more interesting than football. It's faster-paced - the action is constant.

"The community is amazing. Once you walk off the field, you hang out with guys on the other team."

Both will compete in the 16th annual Cornhusker State Games, held July 8-16 in Lincoln. Organizers look for 18,000 athletes this year to compete in 48 categories, including new this year: BMX racing and rugby.

John Boehm, coach, part-time player and director of rugby competition for the games, said the sport will gain added credibility through its debut in the Cornhusker State Games. "This means more attention to the sport."

Boehm said he looks for 30 teams to compete in one of four brackets at the games:

—High school.

—Open Men's (age 19 and over).

—Men's over 40.

—Women's.

Sliva will compete with the Greater Omaha Area Touring Side, or G.O.A.T.S., in the Open Men's Division; Dacy will play with his high school teammates from Central and Creighton Prep in the High School Division.

Whatever the outcome, Dacy and Sliva said, they'll enjoy the competition and camaraderie. When they walk off the field, they'll know they've been part of something greater than sport.

Rugby, although sometimes misunderstood as a sport for brutes or those without fear, is actually a sport rich with history and tradition. According to legend, rugby originated at Rugby school in England, when a pupil broke the rules of soccer in 1823 and ran with the ball. The student's faux pas is commemorated on the Rugby school grounds with an engraved stone.

In rugby, teams score points by carrying, passing, kicking and grounding an oval ball in the scoring zone at the far end of the field.

Gender equity is alive and well in rugby.

Passion for the sport of rugby spans the generation gap for Dom Dacy (l) and Greg Sliva (r).

Play stops only when a try is scored, the ball goes out of play or an infringement occurs.

"In football, you stop after every play," Dacy said.

Rugby has been Sliva's ticket to travel abroad. InNovember, he was invited to travel with the Chicago Lion, a Super League team (the most competitive at the club level) to tour Ireland.

Nineteen years of play means Sliva has plenty of stories to tell. At the top of his list is participating in the Aspen Ruggerfest in 1996. Little was expected of the G.O.A.T.S., seeded last and pitted against top-ranked Ompac, from San Diego. Although the G.O.A.T.S. lost by two points in the closing minutes, Sliva said, he's never seen the squad play better. "It was probably the greatest moment our club has had. It took a huge effort from our whole team just to make it to that point."

Contrary to popular belief, rugby isn't a violent sport. True, competitors tackle, block and hit one another without pads. "You have to more aggressive. It does have reputation. Hitting guys basically bare-skinned. You have to be tough to play," Dacy said.

But it isn't dangerous.

Dacy said his most serious injury during four years of competition is a sprained shoulder. Sliva's injuries are somewhat more serious, but understandable because he's played rugby for 19 years.

Just once has he suffered a serious injury. Sliva explained he was tackled high - which is illegal - and sustained cuts to his face and lost a tooth. Dacy's father took him to the hospital.

"Nothing life-threatening," he said. "And I broke my finger once."

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Does this sound like the fitness equipment in your house? Too often we are buying equipment off late-night infomercials that is appealing at three in the morning. However, when it arrives at our home it is not as easy to use or as fun as it was made to seem on television. Making an uninformed decision about fitness equipment will often end up in a waste of space and money.

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But before you come in, we'd like to give you a head start with these helpful guidelines:

1. Get a physical exam before you start any exercise program. If you have been inactive for several years or are new to an exercise program, be sure to consult your family physician first. This is especially true if you are over age 35, have had health problems in the past or have a history of heart disease in your family.

2. Begin planning for your home fitness center before you buy any equipment. Set aside a portion of or an entire room in your house or apartment that is exclusively for fitness, and make sure that it is as comfortable as possible so you'll enjoy using it. If you like music or like to look outside while exercising, make sure these things are accessible. Do not force yourself to exercise in a part of the house that isn't comfortable as you will not be motivated to spend time there.

3. Decide if you need a companion to be successful. If you prefer to do things in life with someone as opposed to going it alone, find a friend to train with who lives nearby. Encouraging your spouse or children to exercise with you is an excellent way to stay healthy and promote family unity.

4. Make fitness a part of your daily schedule. However you keep track of your day, make sure to include exercise time as a specific item on your personal "to do" list. Schedule it like you would any other appointment and keep that appointment with your exercise like you would with a friend or business colleague.

5. Use affirmations to help you program your subconscious to accept new beliefs. They should be positive statements like, "I am living a healthier lifestyle by exercising several times a week at home." Repeat your affirmations several times per week.

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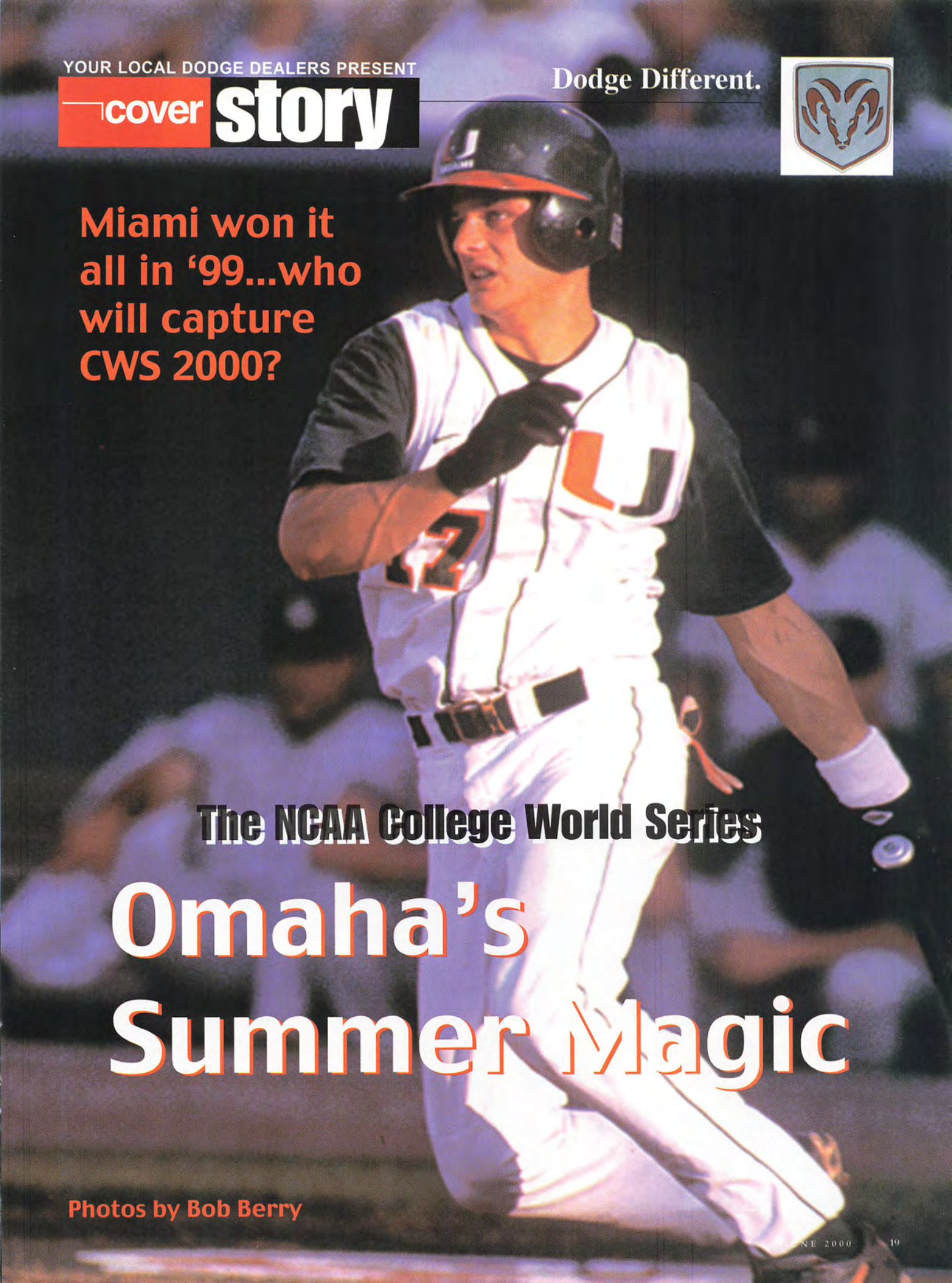
cover story



Miami won it all in '99...who will capture CWS 2000?

The NCAA College World Series

Omaha's Summer Magic

Photos by Bob Berry

YOUR LOCAL DODGE DEALERS PRESENT
cover story
Dodge Different.

Hurricanes win Omaha's 50th CWS

Omahans and fans of college baseball in general had a difficult time picking a sentimental favorite when Miami and Florida State squared off in the 1999 CWS Championship Game.

On one side was Florida State with colorful and popular coach Mike Martin (see page 34). Martin's personality and charm on his trips to Omaha in recent years has been such that he has won over Nebraska fans - the same Nebraska fans who it seems have been bred to loathe the Seminoles with football at the root of that sentiment. But Martin is different and his 11 previous trips to the CWS without taking home the title makes him one to root for at Rosenblatt.

In the other dugout was Jim Morris, coach of the Miami Hurricanes and a man who was on the wrong side of perhaps the most dramatic CWS moment ever. Even his last name adds an ironic twist to that breathtaking moment — Warren Morris of LSU going deep with two outs in the ninth inning of the '96 title game to steal victory from Coach Morris and the 'Canes. As Miami players watched, then crumpled to the field in disbelief, CWS fans were hoping Jim Morris would have a chance one day to undo the cruelty of that fateful swing.

So when Florida State outlasted Stanford 14-11 in a 13-inning CWS classic in its own right, the stage was set for a winner-take-all Florida showdown.

Miami's Kevin Brown homered in the second inning, but that was the only run for the Hurricanes early as Florida State led 2-1 in the fifth. But Miami came to life with five runs in its half of inning five and Brown delivered the key blow, a three-run double to the gap in right-center field.

With the score 6-5 in the ninth, Miami reliever Michael Neu faced the 'Noles Kevin Cash with two outs. Although memories of 1996 had to be dancing in the minds of Miami players, coaches and fans, Neu struck out Cash for his 16th save of the year and, more importantly, a national championship.

It was the third for Miami but the first for Coach Morris, who also became the first head coach ever to lead his team to the CWS in each of his first six years at the helm. For Florida State's Martin, it was trip #11 to Omaha without collecting a national championship trophy for the return trip to Tallahassee (for more on Coach Mike Martin, turn to page 34).

Florida State pounded out a win over Stanford in its bracket final.

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cover story
Dodge Different.

The '99 CWS capped the first 64-team post-season tournament in NCAA Division I baseball history. Four teams each converged on 16 regional sites and and the 16 regional winners were paired up for best-of-three "super regionals."

Only two teams, Oklahoma State and Fullerton, were able to win super regionals on the road and advance to Omaha while six teams won at home to move on to the CWS.

The sub-plot to the '99 Series developed as the rivalry between Stanford and Florida State in their four-team double elimination bracket. Stanford won the first time the teams played 10-6, but Florida State came back to defeat the Cardinal twice (8-6 and 14-11) and advance to the championship.

The Big XII had two teams among the final eight but both, Oklahoma State and Texas A&M, exited with losses in their first two games. Traditional power LSU, perhaps the school most beloved by Omaha fans, was absent from the '99 CWS after being sidelined by Alabama in a super regional.

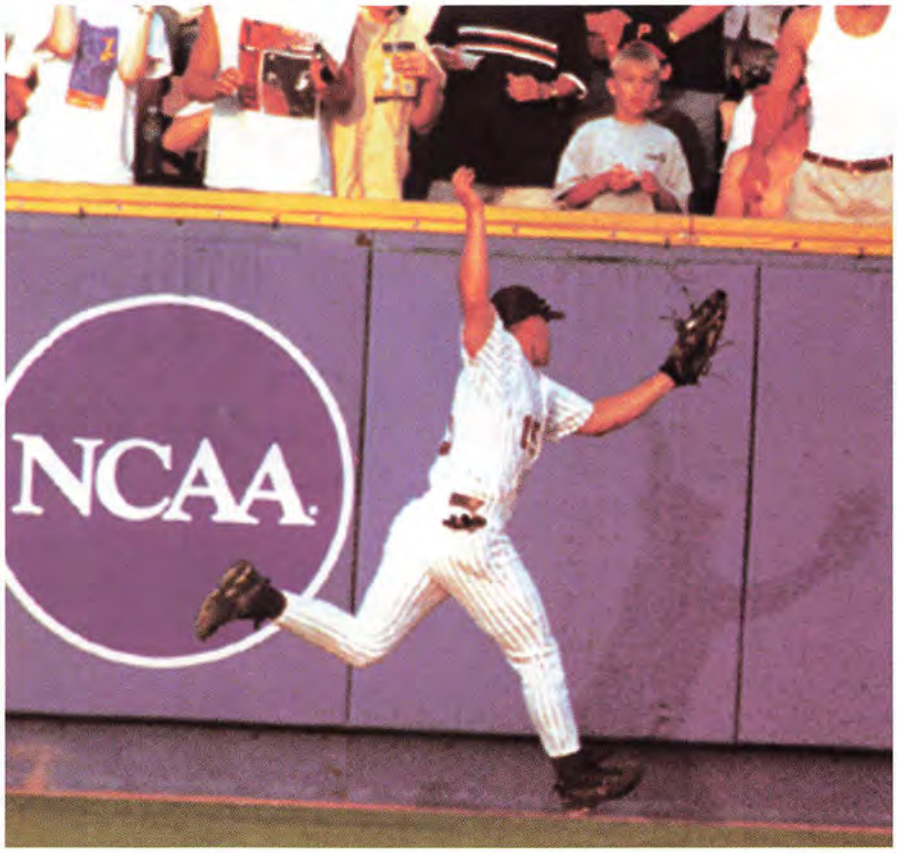
1999 College World Series All-Tournament Team

C Jeremiah Klosterman, FSU
1B John Gall, Stanford
2B Marshall McDougall, FSU*
3B Lale Esquivel, Miami
SS Bobby Hill, Miami
OF Matt Diaz, FSU
OF G.W. Keller, Alabama
OF Manny Crespo, Miami
DH Sam Scott, FSU
P Chris Chavez, FSU
P Michael Neu, Miami

*CWS Most Valuable Player

1999 College World Series Game-By-Game Results

Championship: Miami 6, Florida State 5
Game 13: Florida State 14, Stanford 11 (13 innings)
Game 12: Florida State 8, Stanford 6
Game 11: Miami 5, Alabama 2
Game 10: Florida State 7, CS-Fullerton 2
Game 9: Alabama 6, Rice 5
Game 8: CS-Fullerton 4, Texas A&M 2
Game 7: Stanford 10, Florida State 6
Game 6: Rice 7, Oklahoma State 2
Game 5: Miami 8, Alabama 1
Game 4: Stanford 9, CS-Fullerton 2
Game 3: Florida State 7, Texas A&M 3
Game 2: Miami 8, Rice 4
Game 1: Alabama 11, Oklahoma State 3



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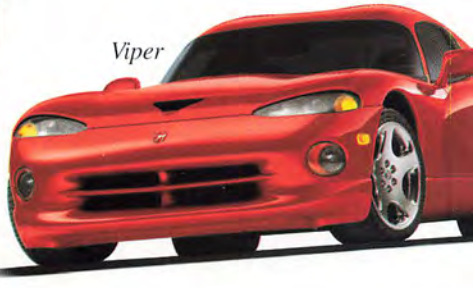

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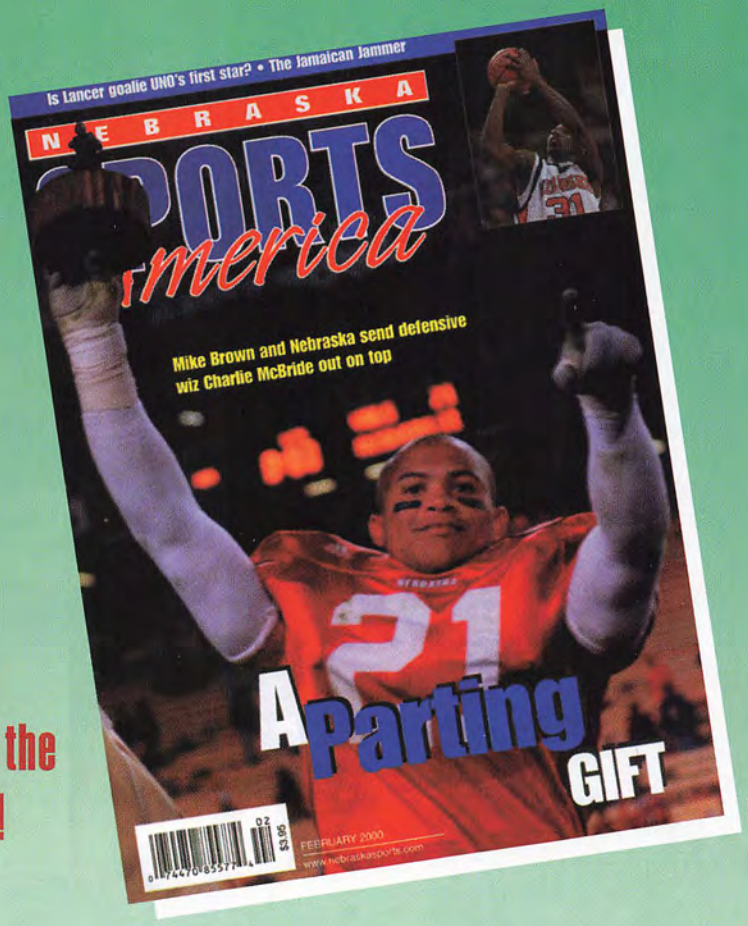

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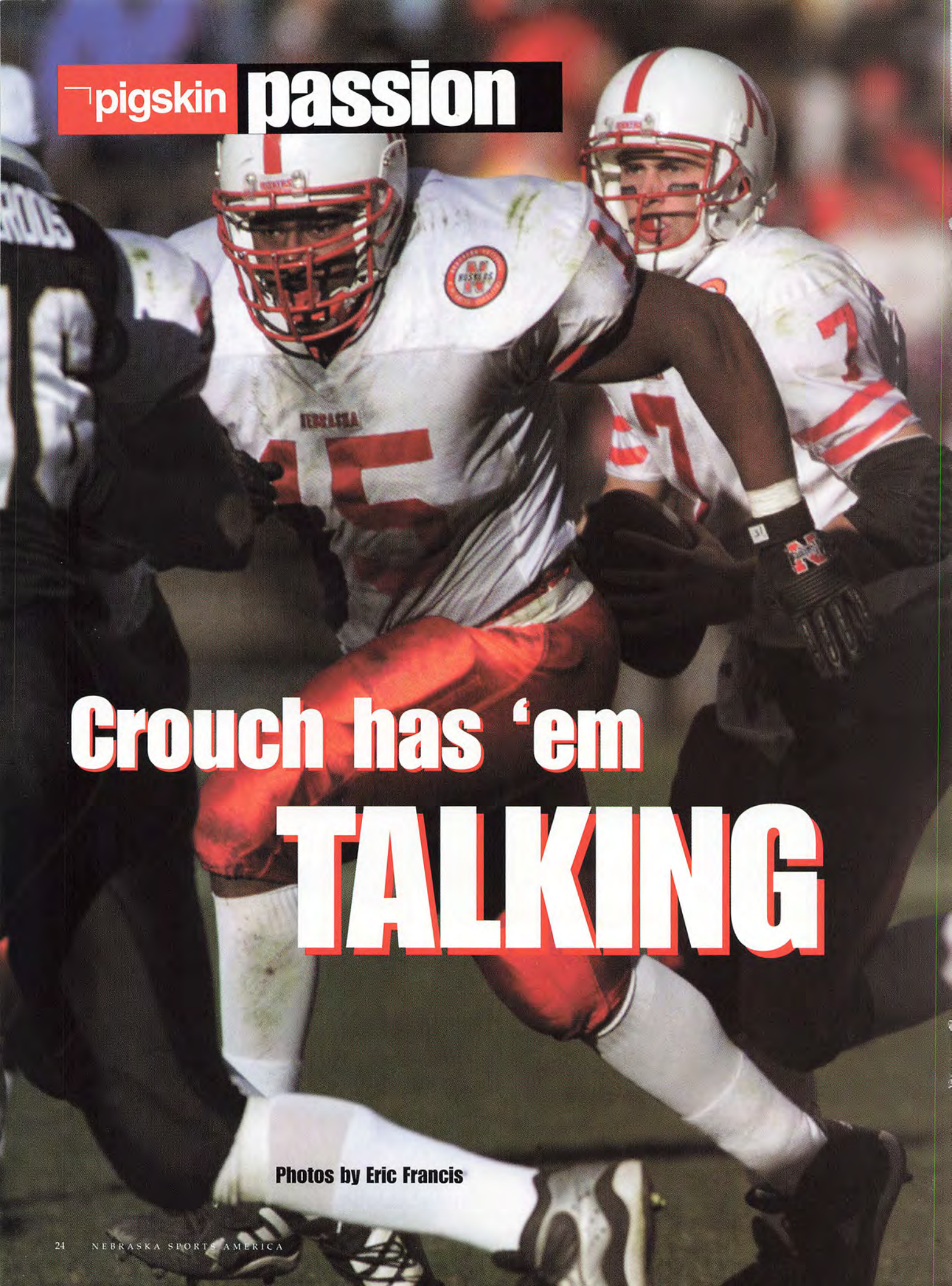


Crouch has 'em TALKING

Photos by Eric Francis

People in the know think NU's junior quarterback is on the verge of something big.....

Really Big

BY KEVIN WARNEKE

Excuse Carlos Polk if he gets slightly carried away when talking about Husker quarterback Eric Crouch.

Polk can't help himself because Crouch gives him plenty of ammunition. He and his teammates keep mistaking their quarterback for those playing another position. Perhaps, it's just their way of paying him a compliment.

The Husker middle linebacker likes to talk about a play in last season's Iowa game when Crouch, while in the open field, took out a Hawkeye defender.

When he did, Polk recalled, the Husker defenders had added respect for their quarterback.

"We used to think he's a quarterback, he won't tuck his shoulder. When he did that (against Iowa), since then, I think we all had a different attitude toward him: 'He's no quarterback, he's a running back.'"

Offensive lineman Toniu Fonoti is more direct: "He's one of the best running backs, I mean quarterbacks, I've seen."

Then there's center Dominic Raiola: "Toughness? Just like a running back."

Polk, Fonoti and Raiola aren't the only ones talking about Crouch, and his emergence as a Husker legend in waiting.

Crouch has heard the comparisons - stacking him against Heisman Trophy runner-up Tommie Frazier, former NFL quarterback Jerry Tagge and his position coach at Nebraska, Turner Gill.

Crouch, when queried about his status among Nebraska quarterbacks, takes a diplomatic approach. He downplays the comparisons, while paying homage to the Husker elite. "The most important thing is that I continue to make plays on the field and keep my confidence high, and do the things I can control."

Then, he adds, "It's an honor to have my name included in the same sentence."

Gill, who ranks eighth among Husker passers and 35th in rushing, said this type of talk about Crouch should wait. For now, the Husker junior must focus on honing his game.

"He's a young guy who's done a lot of good things," Gill said, "but he still has a lot of good things to show to myself, to himself and the country."

Jerry Tagge, who played in the NFL, WFL and CFL after leading Nebraska to two national championships, said comparisons are inevitable because Husker fans take their football so seriously. As a Husker, Tagge found himself being compared to Dennis Claridge and Bob Churchich.

Tagge said Crouch has all the tools. "Nebraska asks much more of its quarterbacks than in my day. He can do everything."

Crouch already ranks among the top Husker quarterbacks of all-time in a slew of offensive categories.

Husker fans need only look at the numbers to realize where Crouch may end up on Nebraska's all-time rushing and passing charts:

—His 1,348 yards rushing already has him 33rd among Nebraska's leading rushers. Should he average 900 yards rushing during each of the coming two seasons, he'll finish third on the all-time Nebraska rushing chart - just ahead of Calvin Jones, but behind Mike Rozier and Ahman Green.

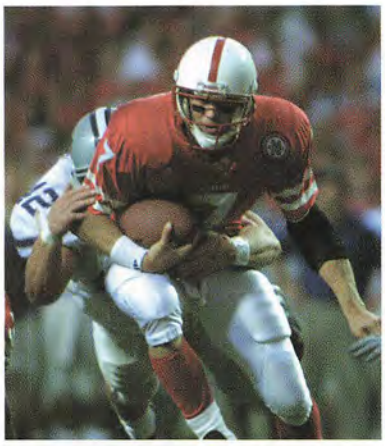
—His 1,870 yards passing has him 11th among Nebraska's all-time leading passers. Should he throw for 1,000 yards in each of the next two seasons, he'll finish third among Nebraska's top passers, behind Tagge and Dave Humm, but ahead of Frazier and Gill.

One other statistic could secure Crouch's place among Nebraska's top quarterbacks: a national championship. Tagge and Frazier led Nebraska to college football's top rung. Gill led the Huskers to within an inch of a National Championship in 1984.

Opposite: Nebraska quarterback Eric Crouch follows Willie Miller (15) in the Huskers' victory at Colorado last fall.

One other statistic could secure Crouch's place among Nebraska's top quarterbacks: a national championship. Tagge and Frazier led Nebraska to college football's top rung. Gill led the Huskers to within an inch of a National Championship in 1984.

"Winning a National Championship is definitely a major goal of mine," Crouch said. "If it doesn't happen, it doesn't happen. But I'm going to use everything I have to get this team to that level."



Gill disagrees about the need for Crouch and the Huskers to win a National Championship. "All I'm looking for is execution and performance. I think everyone looks at the end results to say all these W's we get is based on a quarterback. We don't believe that. It's a team effort."

Evaluating Crouch's development means charting his progress in all aspects of the game. Who better than Gill, who was named Nebraska's quarterbacks coach in 1992, to complete the quarterback's report card.

Speed: "Outstanding. I guess it's a one-word deal: Outstanding. I don't know if he's absolutely the fastest (on the team), but he's definitely one of the top three or four."

Passing Ability: I think it's been very good, improved year after year, week after week. Obviously, he didn't throw a whole lot in high school. I think they only threw five, six times a game. So I think he's done a tremendous job, especially last spring to last fall."

Leadership: "Last year was a big step toward leadership because he proved to himself, to our football team, to the coaches that he has leadership qualities. By example. He also can do it by word, but he's not that type of a rah-rah guy. He has to do what he feels he needs to do to lead this team. I believe that's just going out and working hard during the off-season, during the season. I think he has potential to be an outstanding leader.

Playmaking: Exceptional. I think he has all the ability you're looking for in a guy to make plays. Obviously, most of it is running - to make people miss and to break tackles. He has the whole picture."

Big XII defenses will be geared around containing Crouch and limiting his big-play potential with the run or pass. Kansas State (above) and Texas A & M (here) both failed in that regard in 1999.

Durability: "He's definitely in the ranks of what he showed me last year, the team, the coaches and the fans last year that he's very durable."

Heart: "That's what he's all about. That's how I describe him: A guy with a lot of heart and desire."

Perhaps Crouch was at his best nearly two quarters into Nebraska's 1999 victory over Kansas State. Perhaps that play sent a message to Husker fans that he was something special. Those who follow Nebraska football closely - the ones who live and die by the Huskers - won't need to be reminded.

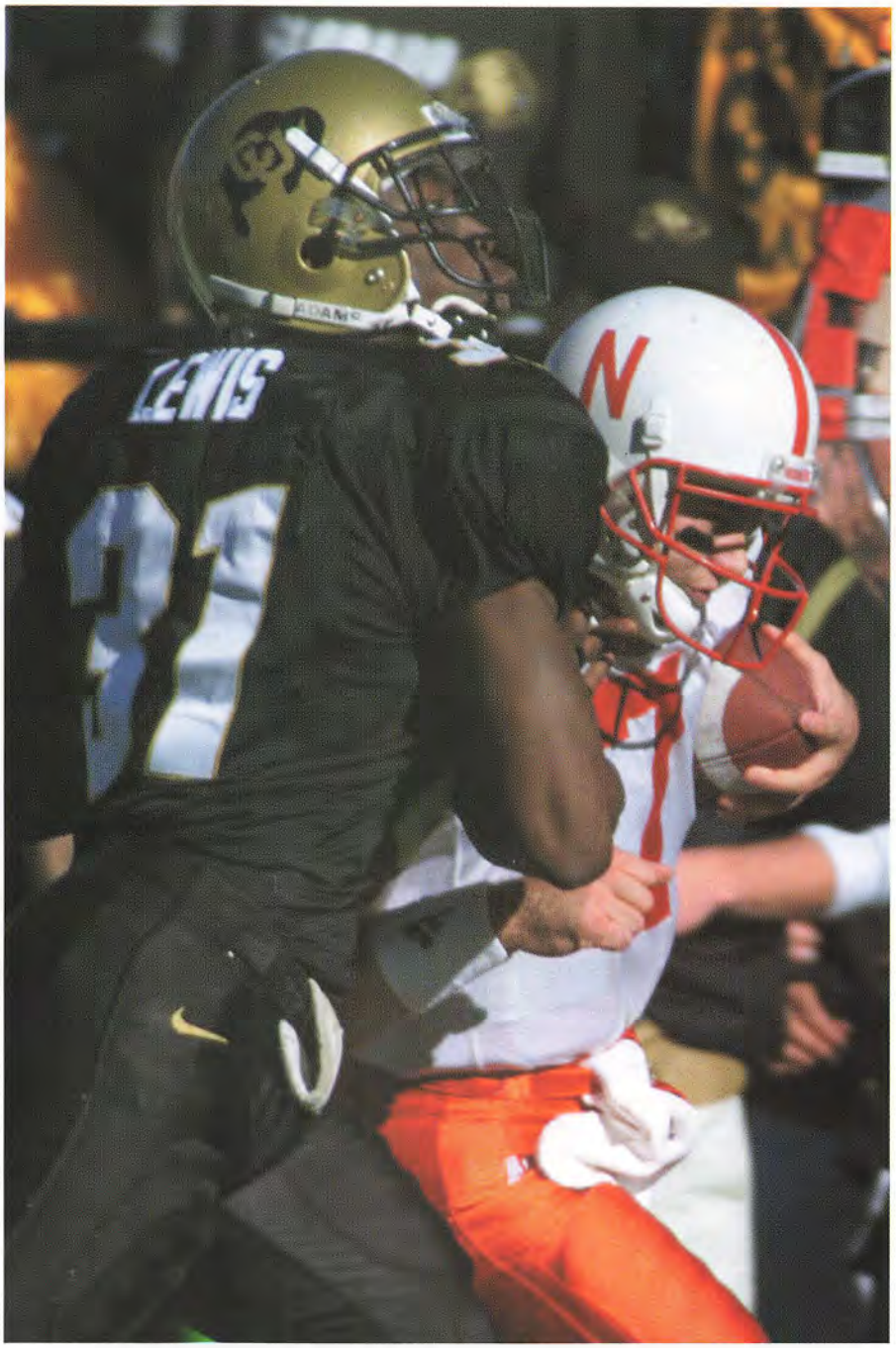
"Eric Crouch looked like a clothes line that - he had so much K-State laundry hanging all over him. But he got it away some how. ...my word!"

-Radio Commentator Adrian Fiala

From the K-State 20, Crouch faced third and 10. As he dropped back to pass, a K-State defender grabbed him and spun him to his left. Somehow, Crouch, while off-balance, hit Tracey Wistrom for a first down.

Adrian Fiala, Husker radio commentator, couldn't contain his enthusiasm after the play. "Eric Crouch looked like a clothes line that - he had so much K-State laundry hanging all over him," he told the Husker radio audience. "But he got it away some how. ...my word!"

Gill, Nebraska's quarterback coach, remembers the play and his first reaction: "At the time, I hoped he wasn't hurt. Will he get up?



Crouch is not for ducking out on the sidelines- if you want him out of bounds contact is required.

"Then, seeing him get up, I thought 'Wow. That's unbelievable."

"That was an exceptional play. That could go down as one of the best plays in college football and definitely Nebraska history. That was one of the top plays a human being can make - being hit and twisted around and yet keeping your focus and concentration. Being able to throw the football there was unbelievable.

"That's what you describe as a playmaker."

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VIEWPOINT

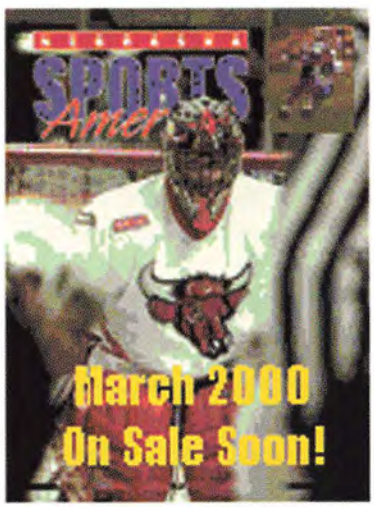
Altman is as good as it gets

Is there a better college basketball coach in the country than Creighton's Dana Altman?

It would be awfully hard to come up with one. There are dozens of extremely successful and very talented coaches at the Division I level alone, and coaches at lower levels of play overcome more obstacles on the road to success.

But no coach does it better than Altman. He has skippered Creighton back into the NCAA tournament for a second straight year and continued CU's steady improvement in the win column. Every year since Altman came to Creighton, the Jays have won more games. Monday's whipping of Southwest Missouri State in the Missouri Valley

Atchley Ford



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NEBRASKASPORTS
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college baseball spotlight

A stunning end to a dream season

SOUTH CAROLINA

BY JOHN MANUEL
BASEBALL AMERICA

Coach Ray Tanner came to South Carolina in 1996 from his alma mater, North Carolina State.

There wasn't much of a difference between the two programs. The Wolfpack are in the Atlantic Coast Conference, which consistently ranks with the Southeastern Conference (of which South Carolina is a member) as the nation's top leagues.

Neither program was considered the league doormat, but neither was the league's pacesetter, either. But the facilities in Columbia, the program's potential, lured the Four Oaks, N.C., native to the Gamecocks' Sarge Frye Field.

That potential showed this season. The Gamecocks won the SEC regular-season championship and put together a pair of 20-game winning streaks. They started the season 22-0, then went on a 21-0 run later in the season that included a dozen consecutive wins in the league. Credit the talent Tanner had assembled and his steady hand at managing it.

"It's really unusual with the parity in college baseball to put together streaks like that," Tanner said. "We've just got a balanced team that has found ways to win."

Take an April 19 game with arch-rival Clemson, which ranked with the Gamecocks in the Top 10 for most of the season. The visiting Tigers led 7-3 going into the bottom of the seventh, but South Carolina's resolve showed through.

The 'Cocks scored single runs in the seventh and eighth innings, both coming with two outs, before sophomore DH Trey Dyson crushed a game-tying homer in the ninth. Clemson took the lead again in the 11th only to see South Carolina rally again to tie. Finally, the Gamecocks won in the 12th on a single by their third catcher of the game, Marcos Rios.

"This team is just incredible," freshman shortstop Drew Meyer said that night. "We have someone different every night step up and get the big hit for us, or make the pitch when we need it. We just don't feel like we can lose." A coach like Tanner, with a team like this, can make you feel that way.

But fate did not smile on the Gamecocks. Unheralded Louisiana-Lafayette stunned South Carolina in the Super Regionals to bring the dream season to a surprising end.

SOUTH CAROLINA SPORTS INFORMATION

In Kip Bouknight (14), Scott Barber (36) and Peter Bauer (38), South Carolina featured arguably the nation's bext three-man rotation.

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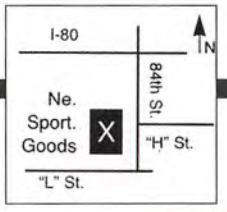

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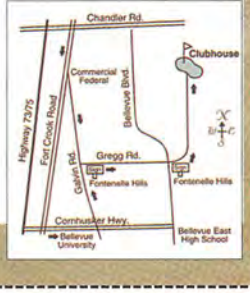

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college baseball **spotlight**

ASU standout comes up short in return to Omaha

CASEY MYERS

BY JOHN MANUEL
BASEBALL AMERICA

One season after getting five hits in the College World Series championship game, Arizona State's Casey Myers was sitting at home like the rest of his Arizona State teammates.

The Sun Devils, national runners-up in 1998, had to watch the NCAA tournament from the outside looking in after a 39-21 1999 season.

Myers took it upon himself to make the Sun Devils national championship contenders in 2000.

A first baseman/DH for much of his career, Myers settled in as the team's top catcher for this season, beating out highly touted Trent Pratt for playing time. Myers calls most of the pitches for the team's young pitching staff, which seemed to get younger and more inexperienced as the season wore on.

Injuries claimed prized freshman righthander Mike Epstein and veteran lefthander Will Waldrip from the rotation, putting more pressure on Myers to shepherd the Sun Devils' staff through the treacherous Pacific-10 Conference.

"Trent has great tools and still is going to be a great catcher for us," ASU coach Pat Murphy says. "But Casey just has such great savvy. He really has helped our young pitchers. I can honestly say I've never been around a better baseball kid."

Myers comes from a baseball family. His father played for the Sun Devils and played catcher in the minor leagues. His brother Corey was the 1999 first-round pick of the Arizona Diamondbacks. Casey doesn't have the same physical tools that earned his brother a $2 million payday after last year's draft, but he makes up for it with his intelligence. The double major in math and economics will graduate in three years, but baseball remains his favorite subject.

"If you stacked me up tool-wise with Corey or Trent, I'd lose 5-0," Casey says. "Trent has better throwing times to second than I do, but I think Coach Murphy is working to get where Trent's thinking more like me. Calling games at catcher comes from being a student as a hitter. I try to think three or four pitches ahead."

Unfortunately for Myers, Arizona State's quest for a return trip to Omaha ended in the NCAA Regionals. Texas eliminated ASU in Tempe, Arizona, winning two straight games to steal the regional crown from the Devils.

ARIZONA STATE SPORTS INFORMATION

Myers had five hits in the 1998 College World Series final, but his ASU Sun Devils could not make it back to Omaha in '99 or this season.

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college baseball spotlight

The CWS city pulls for the FSU coach

MIKE MARTIN

BY JOHN MANUEL
BASEBALL AMERICA

Gary Ward's Oklahoma State teams dominated the old Big 8 Conference, winning every league tournament (and its automatic regional bid) from 1981-96. His teams made 10 trips to Omaha, coming up short of a national championship.

Mike Martin broke Ward's mark for futility last year, though. His Seminoles gamely made their way to the championship game, losing by a run to arch-rival Miami. It was the 11th trip to Rosenblatt Stadium for Martin's charges, and the best they could do was second place.

But instead of grousing about his lot in life or his bad luck, Martin proved once more why he is one of the sport's greatest ambassadors. His postgame comments shed more light on the classy manner in which he has run the Seminoles program for the last 21 seasons—and why fans in Omaha root for the 'Noles to end Martin's record.

"If we had come out here and played badly," Martin said after last year's title game, "I'd leave here really mad. Instead, I leave with a real appreciation of giving everything we had for a goal. You've got to be a real sick puppy to look for something negative in that.

"To witness the character and the guts we've shown here is a real pleasure for me. Dadgum it, we played for it, and we played hard."

Martin is no sick puppy. He's just a successful one. He entered the season with a 1,079-364-3 career record, a .747 winning percentage that ranked second among active coaches, and took his team to its 21st consecutive regional this season. Last year was Florida State's seventh CWS trip in nine years, and the team has won 50 games or more the last six seasons.

Florida State wins games, reaches Omaha consistently, plays hard, clean baseball and produces players for the major leagues by the dozen. Martin has coached 11 first-round picks, such as 1994 No. 1 overall pick Paul Wilson and outfielder J.D. Drew, now a Cardinals outfielder.

The Mike Martin-Omaha love affair continues in 2000 as Florida State avenged its championship loss to Miami a year ago by downing the Hurricanes in a super regional.

For the 12th time, Martin brings a Seminole team to Rosenblatt with a national championship in mind. Only a sick puppy would root against him.

Martin heaps praise on Omaha each and every time he visits for the College World Series, and the CWS city has much affection for the FSU skipper.

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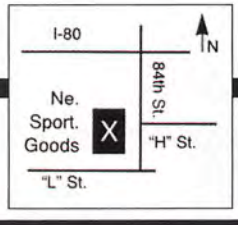

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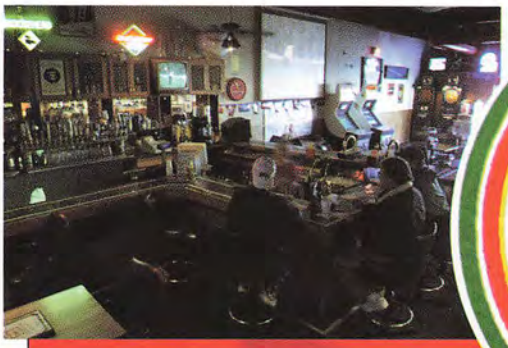

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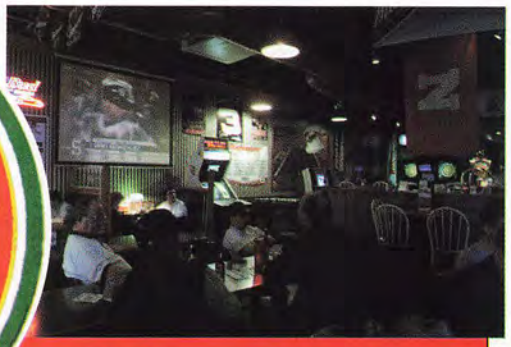

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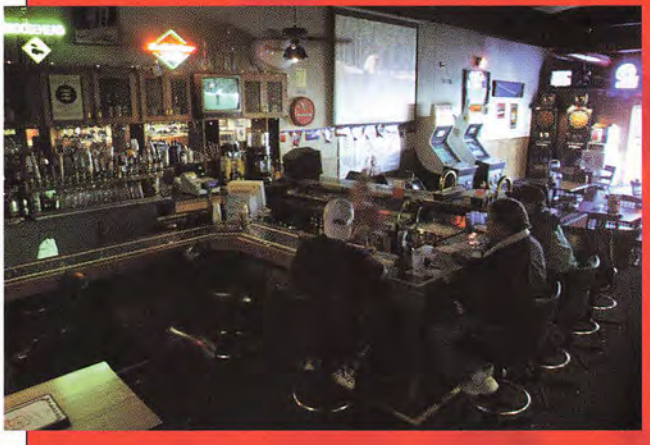

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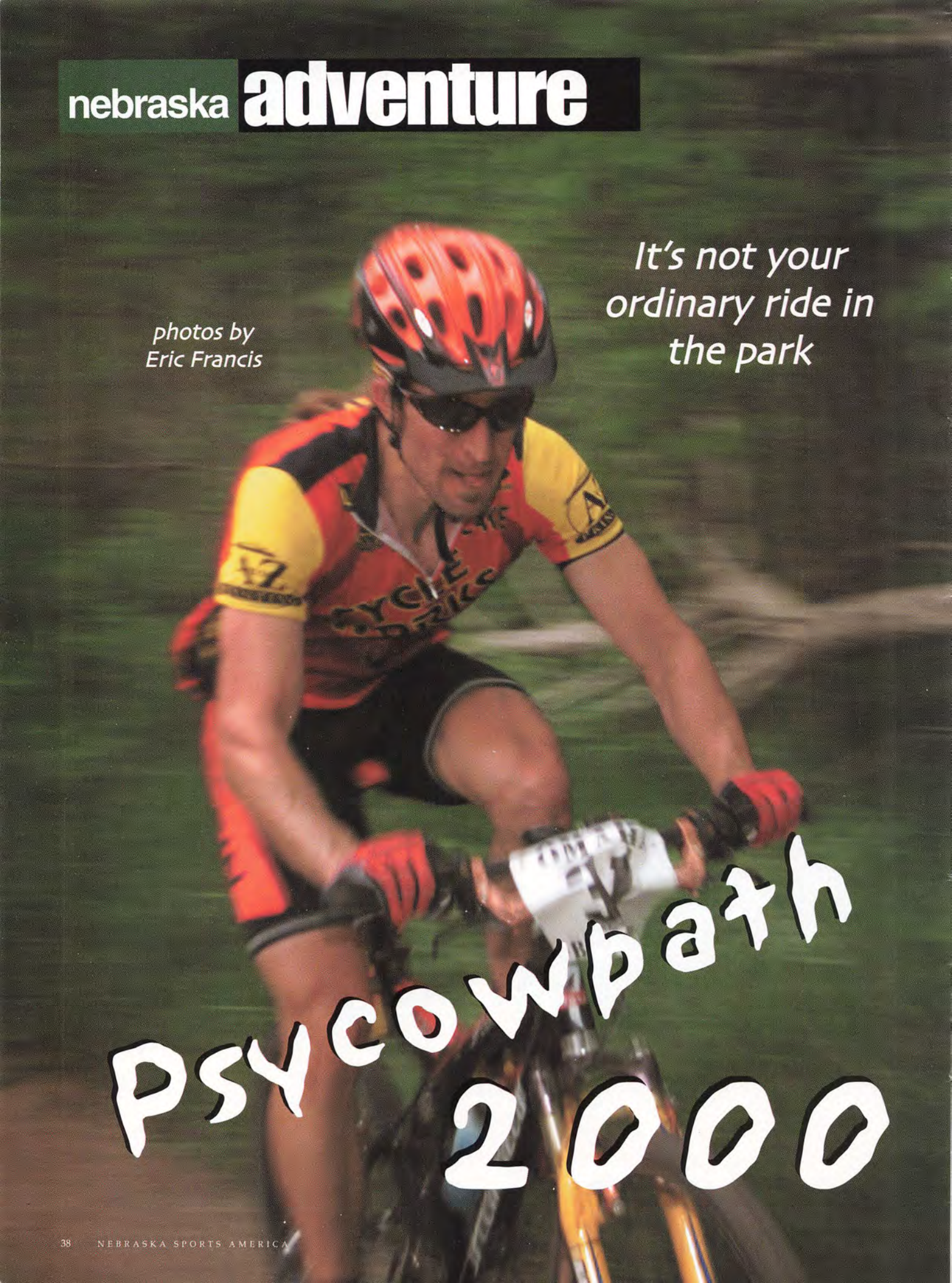
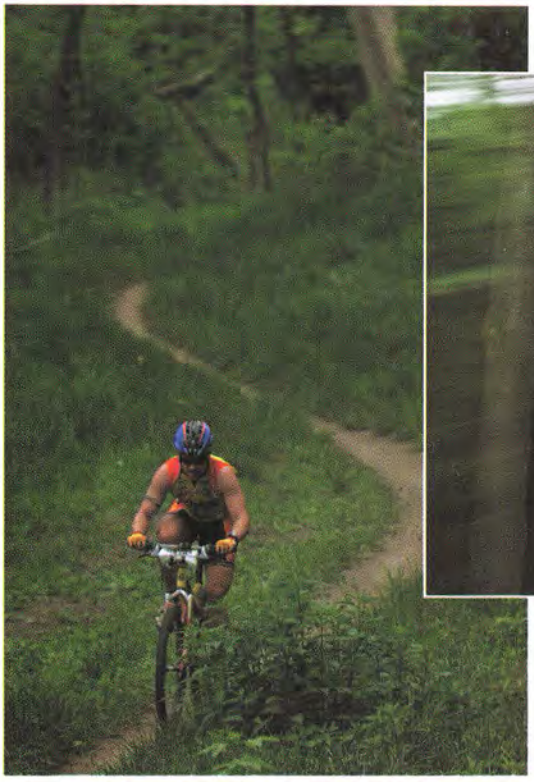


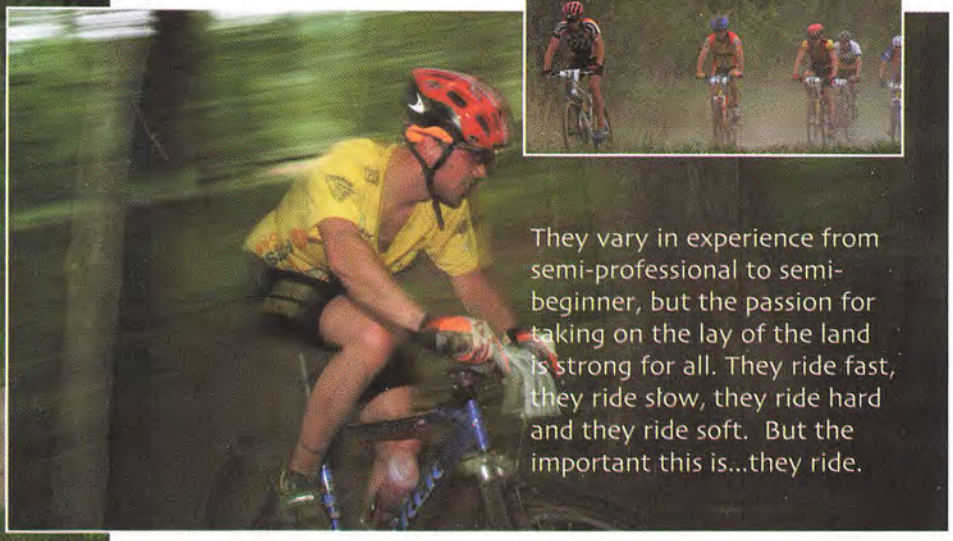
It's not your ordinary ride in the park

photos by Eric Francis

Psycowpath 2000

nebraska adventure





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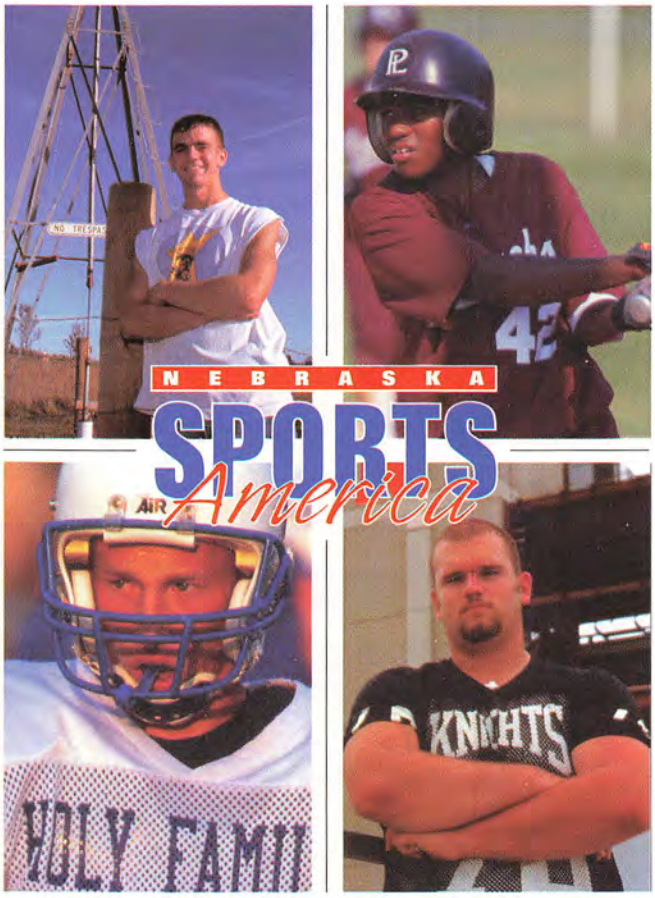

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IN the Stands

WITH TERRY L. HENION

The View from a Block Away

This is the first month of summer and that means every baseball, softball and soccer field will be near to bursting with kids, parents, family, friends and fans.

There will be winners, losers, those who tie and those who simply try their best and let others keep the score.

And there will be referees and umpires, many of them volunteers, who donate their time and efforts simply because they enjoy the games over which they officiate.

Recently, in a well-publicized event, a parent in Nebraska was sentenced to a jail term for punching, pummeling and generally pounding a teen-age umpire at a youth baseball game.

Apparently, the parent thought the young umpire was cheating his son's team and decided the way to remedy the situation was to assault the teen-ager.

Why do we — the parents of these young athletes — act this way? It is easy to point the finger at the offender and say, "Oh, that was just him. I would never do anything like that." And while only an unstable few parents would actually strike a game official, the sad truth is that many unleash verbal abuse toward referees and umpires at youth sporting events.

When my kids — now both grown — were playing, I, too, would loudly and emphatically question the eyesight and judgment of game officials.

My favorite expression at what I perceived as a questionable call was to spread my arms akimbo, like a bird about to take flight and cry plaintively, "What was THAT? What was THAT?"

It was shouted in such a way that observers thought I was sarcastically pointing out that the official had blatantly blown such an easy call.

Truth be known, my pet bleating was accurate as could be. Most of the time, I really didn't know what had caused the call, but I knew that it had gone against MY team and therefore it had to be a bad call.

Once the kids get old enough, around age 13 or so, they wait until the time is right and then they say, as only kids can, "Dad, I would appreciate it at my games if you would keep your pie hole shut, OK?"

At a soccer game, when my daughter was 14 or so, I loudly berated a soccer official for continuing to blow calls (in my view) of the much-debated offsides rule.

Actually, I could easier guess the number of spots on a Dalmatian than de-code the offsides rule, but that made no difference at the time. I let him know that he was incorrect time after time and while consistency usually is something to strive for, he was on the verge of setting an all-time record for blown calls.

At halftime, the referee strolled up to me and said, stiffly, "Sir! From this point forward, only positive comments will be tolerated!"

I thought that over for a second and replied, "Well, I'm POSITIVE that you don't have a clue what you are doing out there. How about THAT?"

Exit, stage left.

As I watched the second half from my car, about a block away, I pondered what had occurred. It dawned on me that perhaps I was in dire need of a self-assessment or, at the very least, an attitude adjustment. Oh, I still yelled now and then after that, but not like before. I learned my lesson the hard, and embarrassing, way.

Of course, I still yelled "encouraging constructive criticism" to my kids as they played soccer. And because I had never played even a single second of the sport, that qualified me to direct their every move. But that is another story for another time.

I read the story about the parent and how angry he had gotten, so irate that he assaulted a teen-age volunteer umpire and beat him to a pulp. And while I shook my head in disgust at the reaction of this nitwit, the thought occurred to me that perhaps he wasn't that much different than I in one regard.

There is something about being on the sideline when OUR kids are playing that brings out the worst in many of us. I don't know why this happens (ask your neighborhood psychologist) but it does.

And so with summer upon us and the games well under way, when the torrid sun beats down hard on the back of your neck and the furious action on the field leaves you hot and bothered at some teen-age official's call, let me offer this simple bit of advice:

Chill.

Terry Henion is a long-time sportswriter who has worked for the Omaha World-Herald and Hastings Tribune and is a regular contributor to NSA.

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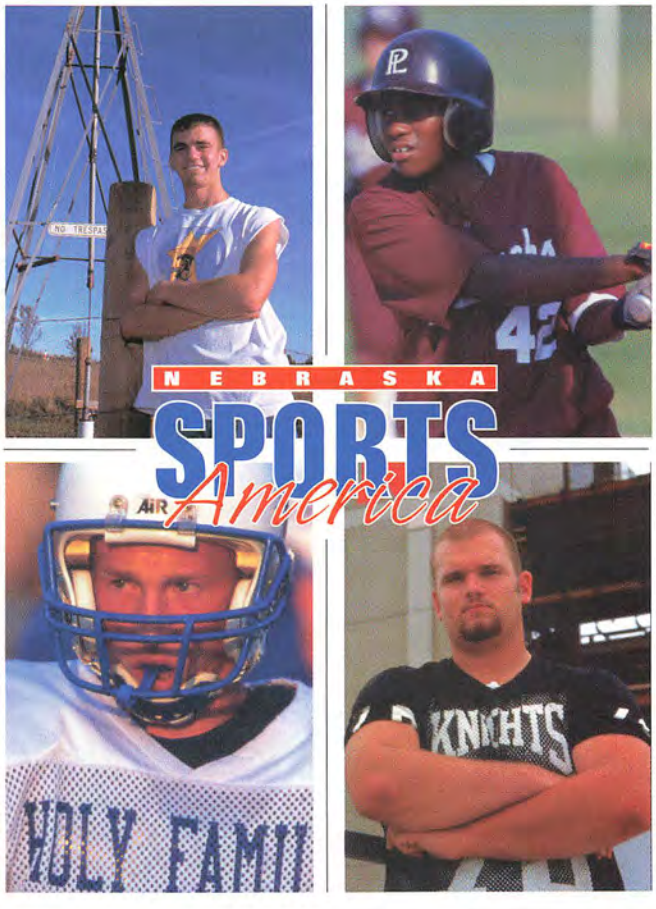

THE rose parade

BY JIM ROSE

The O's Just Love a Kid that can Play

What is it about this thing?

What is it about campers from Mississippi, station wagons from Wichita and gumbo freaks from the bayou that have O's giddy as a fresh dad?

What is it about aluminum bats, Zestos for dinner, midweek consolation games and Jack's cornpone but charming lines between innings?

I mean geez, the CWS turns us all into fiances at Borsheims.

The O's- that is sports fans from Omaha in the Rose dictionary- are a quirky bunch. Dana's Jays can't get arrested. Most at UNO still think Dean "The Dream" is throwing up J's in the Fieldhouse and even Westside vs. Prep doesn't care about Westside vs. Prep.

Sure, Mav Hockey and the Lancers get a line. But if the suds ever dried up, just turn the Civic into a Food Barn. Yeah, the course is slow on weekends and forget about a pickup softball game. Every patch of green in the county has a rover between second and center.

Otherwise, O's are just fine with ESPN and Fox. So, just who are all of those people piled up at the Johnny each June?

I got it. I got it.

You see, the O's all go soft for the kid next door.

Any wonder? This is the kid who thought you were pretty cool for tossing one more, even with Mom screaming from the bathroom window.

O's go looney over the kid who lost his first four gloves, but wore that fifth one to bed. You see, that fifth one made the catch and O's are great about kids who play. O's as coaches think it's just fine for the kid out in right to spend all day filling that glove with ants waiting for a fly ball.

O's go wacky over the kid who grew up in front of a mirror, not the screen. Swing after swing, he kept trying to get Junior's motion down just right.

Down the street, the other kids are parked in front of channel 15 guessing who Dawson's gonna take down in Wednesday night's episode. O's know the best math lesson comes from the boxscore and O's as dads relearn patience guiding the base runner around the scorecard.

O's can't get enough of this kid. Ya see, this kid really, I mean really, wants to know who Bob Gibson is.

And did Creighton really get here once? How about that? This kid wants to know "Do we really cheer for Miami and Florida State?"

Nutty kid. This kid hopes out loud that classy Mark Marquess will still be in the third base box when he gets there and bugs Dad every February about keeping CWS tickets because one of these days the Huskers are gonna be in the Saturday afternoon opener.

This is the O's kinda kid. Stands up straight, mows the lawn first, remembers Mother's Day and leaves hanging ornaments for his girlfriend's ears and the tree.

On Friday nights he climbs into the back seat and is OK just holding hands. Yessir, he's our kid. He runs...er...sprints out ground balls, tucks his shirt in, is genetically pre-determined to convey the words "please" and "thank you."

He tells the truth, works extra for what his has and what he wants.

Older O's get choked up right before game time. Means a lot when the kid peels off that cap, tips his head and mouths the words.

Most kids anymore don't give those colors the time of day. O's kids do. Heck, they even know why.

Maybe the kid has this spell over us. By the time these two weeks are over, he isn't the kid. He's our kid. To some O's, he becomes a son. He seems to have that mystical way.

With each trip to the batter's box, he takes us on a magical ride through life's time machine. We catch just a warm glimpse of those Christmas mornings, Halloween costumes, and Easter egg hunts and car washes.

He reminds us that whatever we do, nothing beats being a dad and having a little boy.

The kid lines a fastball to left, tries to stretch one into two, and goes in safely... teeth first. What do you mean dreams can't come true?

Jim Rose is program director at KLIN Radio in Lincoln and host of the "Sports Nightly" call-in show on the Pinnacle Sports Network. He was recently honored as the Nebraska Sportscaster of the Year and NSA is happy to welcome Jim to our pages as a regular contributor.

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